

# Department of Homeland Security **Office of Inspector General**

Inspection of FEMA's Regional Offices –  
Region IX





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Preface

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Office of Inspector General (OIG) was established by the *Homeland Security Act of 2002* (Public Law 107-296) by amendment to the *Inspector General Act of 1978*. This is one of a series of audit, inspection, and special reports prepared as part of our oversight responsibilities to promote economy, efficiency, and effectiveness within the Department.

This report addresses the strengths and weaknesses of the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Region IX Office. It is based on interviews with employees and officials of relevant agencies and institutions, direct observations, and a review of applicable documents.

The recommendations herein have been developed to the best knowledge available to our office, and have been discussed in draft with those responsible for implementation. We trust this report will result in more effective, efficient, and economical operations. We express our appreciation to all of those who contributed to the preparation of this report.

A black and white image of a handwritten signature, which appears to be "Anne L. Richards".

Anne L. Richards  
Assistant Inspector General for Audits

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## Abbreviations

ARRA	<i>American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009</i>
BCA	benefit cost analysis
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
CNMI	Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
COTR	contracting officer's technical representative
DHS	Department of Homeland Security
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
FMAG	Fire Management Assistance Grant
FY	fiscal year
HMA	Hazard Mitigation Assistance
IMAT	Incident Management Assistance Team
OCFO	Office of the Chief Financial Officer
OCSP	Office of Counterterrorism and Security Preparedness
OIG	Office of Inspector General
PKEMRA	<i>Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act of 2006</i>
RAC	Regional Advisory Council
RECCWG	Regional Emergency Communications Coordination Working Group
RESP	Regional Exercise Support Program
RRCC	Regional Response Coordination Center

# OIG

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*Department of Homeland Security  
Office of Inspector General*

## **Executive Summary**

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) maintains 10 Regional Offices, which are responsible for implementing the agency's programs and policies; preparing for, responding to, and recovering from disasters and emergencies; and mitigating against all hazards. Our primary objective was to determine whether FEMA's Regional Offices are effectively meeting their responsibilities. This report focuses specifically on Region IX.

Region IX has consistently engaged its stakeholders at the state, local, and tribal levels in order to identify and address regional priorities across all phases of the emergency management cycle. In general, Region IX has made great efforts to fulfill its legislated responsibilities and implement several delegated authorities, but we identified areas for improvement.

Region IX faces both budgetary and staffing shortfalls across its divisions and programs. Region IX needs additional guidance in the area of preparedness, and needs further guidance or instruction on the roles and responsibilities of Region IX's Protection and Prevention mission area. Improvements and assessments are still needed in the disaster grants closeout process to identify issues that may be causing extensive delays. Region IX is also limited in its ability to conduct financial and programmatic monitoring of disaster and nondisaster grant programs.

The Regional Advisory Council has not been maintained; therefore, Region IX is missing opportunities to identify and remediate weaknesses or deficiencies in preparedness, protection, response, recovery, and mitigation activities. We are making eight recommendations that, when implemented, should improve the effectiveness of FEMA's Region IX Office.

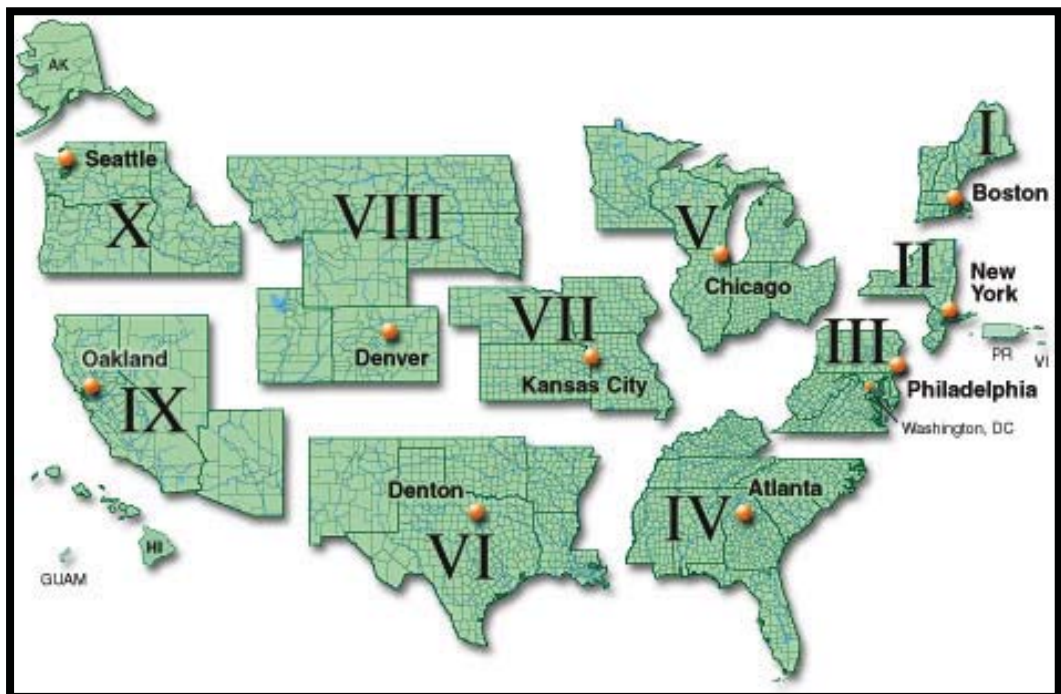
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## Background

### FEMA Regional Offices

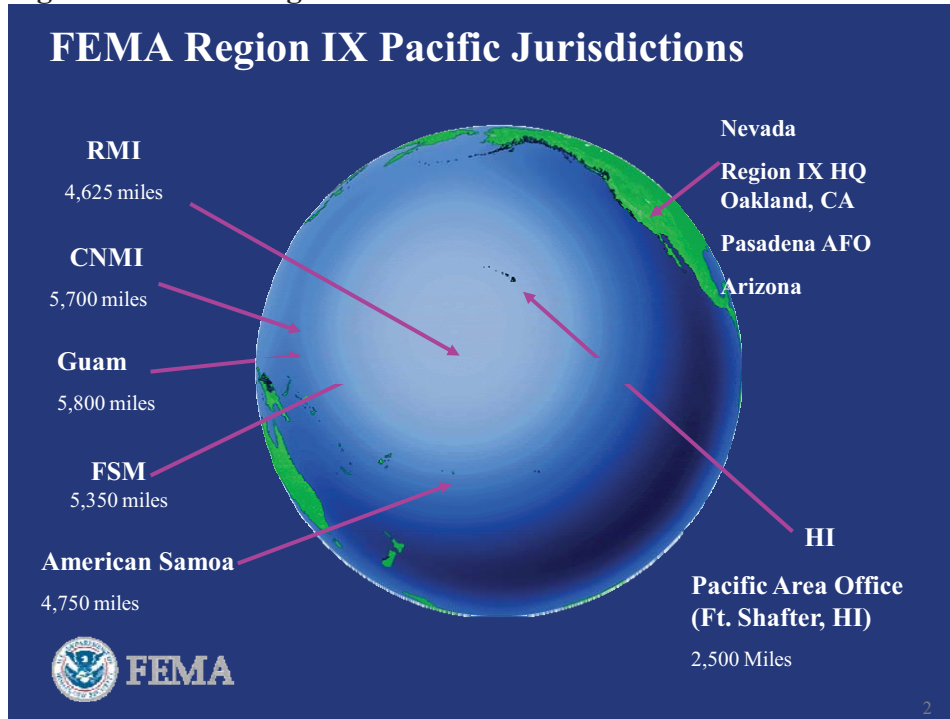
The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) maintains 10 Regional Offices (figure 1), each of which is led by a Regional Administrator who reports to the FEMA Administrator. The FEMA Administrator has said that he believes emergency management organizations are most responsive and effective when the authority to make operational decisions is delegated to the command levels in the field with “boots on the ground.” As a result, FEMA headquarters is developing the policies, or “rules and tools,” of the programs that the agency manages, while the Regional Offices are becoming increasingly responsible for implementing those programs in the field.

**Figure 1. FEMA Regions**



Source: FEMA

**Figure 2. FEMA Region IX**



Source: FEMA Region IX

Region IX, whose Regional Office is in Oakland, California, works in partnership with the emergency management agencies of Arizona, California, Hawaii, and Nevada, as well as the territories of American Samoa and Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI), the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, and the Region's 156 federally recognized tribes. Region IX maintains a Pacific Area Office in Honolulu, Hawaii, and an Area Field Office in Pasadena, California. Region IX serves a culturally diverse population in excess of 36 million people and covers 386,000 square miles (figure 2).

To accomplish its mission, Region IX maintains a workforce of 171 permanent full-time employees. The Region's most common disasters are earthquakes, wildfires, hurricanes, typhoons, and other storms that can cause flooding, flash flooding, and landslides.

### **Regional Responsibilities**

The Regions' mission parallels and augments the FEMA headquarters mission, which is to support citizens and first responders to ensure that the Nation works together to build,



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sustain, and improve our capability to prepare for, protect against, respond to, recover from, and mitigate against all hazards. The regional level is where FEMA engages most directly with state, local, and tribal partners, as well as disaster survivors, to deliver frontline services. The Regions also lead the federal response and recovery efforts for incidents across the spectrum of all-hazards events.

**Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act**

Although FEMA's regional structure was in place prior to Hurricane Katrina, the *Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act of 2006* (PKEMRA) directed FEMA to develop and maintain robust Regional Offices and codified the following responsibilities for the Regional Offices:

- Work with state, local, and tribal governments, emergency response providers, and other appropriate entities to identify and address regional priorities.
- Ensure effective, coordinated, and integrated regional preparedness, protection, response, recovery, and mitigation activities and programs for natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other manmade disasters (including planning, training, exercise, and professional development).
- Assist in the development of regional capabilities needed for a national catastrophic response system.
- Coordinate the establishment of effective regional operable and interoperable emergency communications capabilities.
- Foster the development of mutual aid and other cooperative agreements.
- Designate an individual responsible for the development of strategic and operational regional plans in support of the National Response Plan (referred to as the National Response Framework since 2008).
- Staff oversee one or more strike teams to serve as the focal point of the federal government's initial response efforts for natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other manmade disasters within that Region, and otherwise build federal



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response capabilities to respond to natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other manmade disasters within that Region.

- Identify critical gaps in regional capabilities to respond to populations with special needs.
- Maintain and operate a Regional Response Coordination Center or its successor.
- Establish a Regional Advisory Council.

### **Delegated Authorities**

In July 2009, and again in August 2010, the FEMA Administrator announced the delegation of additional authorities to the Regional Offices, intended to improve performance in the Regions and further empower Regional Offices. We conducted a limited inspection of Region IX's implementation of the following delegated authorities:

- Issue mission assignments in excess of \$10 million.
- Review and approve funding for State Management Administrative Costs for the Public Assistance and Hazard Mitigation Grant Programs.
- Approve Fire Management Assistance Grants.
- Approve 40-1 actions for nondisaster acquisitions.
- Determine the annual grants monitoring requirements and schedule.
- Fiscally oversee the (a) Emergency Management Performance, (b) Emergency Operations Center, and (c) Driver's License Security grant programs.
- Oversee the Regional Exercise Support Program.
- Contract for airlift.

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## Results of Review

Region IX has made great efforts to fulfill its legislated responsibilities and implement most delegated authorities. An overarching concern, however, is that Region IX does not have sufficient resources, particularly in the areas of staff and funding for travel and training, to carry out its responsibilities fully and effectively. Region IX officials expressed concerns that they would not be able to fulfill both preparedness and grants responsibilities if they do not receive additional resources.

Regional empowerment requires staffing commensurate with the scope of responsibility and authority. In August 2010, FEMA allocated 84 vacant headquarters positions to the Regional Offices to facilitate emergency preparedness, coordination, and planning at the local level.<sup>1</sup> FEMA emphasized that these positions are an important step toward enabling the Regional Offices to take on increased responsibility and authority. Additionally, FEMA headquarters has provided the Regional Offices with increased funding for professional development and training.

FEMA headquarters is taking steps in the right direction by allocating additional staff and resources to the Regional Offices; however, the steps so far are not sufficient to meet the overall needs of Region IX.

## Preparedness

### Preparedness Activities

Region IX's preparedness activities are guided by the National Preparedness Division, which utilizes the preparedness cycle (figure 3) to support the Region's citizens and first responders by building, sustaining, and improving preparedness capabilities. Region IX strives to achieve preparedness through a continuous cycle of planning, organizing, equipping, training, exercising, evaluating, and improving. Region IX's ongoing preparedness efforts are intended to ensure that emergency management and incident response activities are coordinated during times of crisis.

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<sup>1</sup> The allocated positions included attorneys, disability coordinators, budget coordinators, external affairs specialists, human capital specialists, security specialists, local business transition team leaders, operational planners, and permanent staffing assignments for Incident Management Assistance Teams.

**Figure 3. Preparedness Cycle**



Source: FEMA

Region IX works continually with state, local, and tribal partners to identify priority areas throughout the Region. Region IX has hosted meetings and workshops, including biannual Preparedness Partnership meetings and exercise planning workshops, bringing together partners at the federal, state, local, and tribal levels. These meetings allow Region IX stakeholders to: (1) discuss emergency management preparedness programs; (2) share state- and territory-specific updates, best practices, and lessons learned; (3) conduct training and exercise planning workshops to review the state and territory homeland security strategy; and (4) develop and update the multiyear training and exercise plan. Region IX’s state partners said that the Preparedness Partnership meetings provide an excellent forum for “good, honest discussions.”

Region IX has also been working with its partners to measure and assess preparedness capabilities. Region IX participated in the

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2010 Nationwide Plan Review.<sup>2</sup> Its staff reviewed the plans and certification matrices<sup>3</sup> submitted by entities within the Region and rated each plan on the basis of its adequacy, feasibility, and completeness to manage a catastrophic event. Region IX has also been involved in the completion of State Preparedness Reports, which track, among other things, statewide planning efforts and current preparedness capability levels.

Recognizing the importance of training and exercising in the preparedness cycle, Region IX has led or participated in numerous activities and exercises designed to increase overall preparedness. Internally, Region IX has facilitated Lightning Strike Exercises, which are similar to the FEMA Administrator's Thunderbolt Exercises. These small, no-notice exercises are consistent with the Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program guidance.

In addition, Region IX has worked with its partners to coordinate and conduct exercises designed to validate emergency response plans, policies, and procedures. For instance, in September 2010, Region IX participated in the Guam Emergency Operations Center/Incident Management Assistance Team Functional Exercise. The exercise was intended to validate Emergency Operations Center management training, the Guam All-Hazards Contingency Plan, and the Guam Catastrophic Typhoon Operations Plan.

Furthermore, the Region participated in the activities leading up to the National Level Exercise 2010. Region IX built upon the work of federal, state, local, and private sector partners to develop an operations plan for state and federal response to an improvised nuclear device. Although the exercise was relocated to another Region, the operations plan was presented to senior staff at a Senior Leaders Seminar in Nevada.

Finally, the Region participated in the 2011 Dark Zephyr Exercise. Region IX subject matter experts participated in a series of tabletop exercises focusing on the release of aerosolized anthrax in San Francisco, California. Throughout the exercise, Region IX coordinated with the U.S. Department of Health and Human

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<sup>2</sup> The 2010 Nationwide Plan Review was a legislatively mandated assessment of the catastrophic plans of all 50 states, the District of Columbia, territories, and 75 urban areas.

<sup>3</sup> The certification matrix provided basic data about the jurisdiction's plans and related appendices and annexes, including a self-assessment of each document's adequacy, feasibility, and completeness using a five-point scale.

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Services, which serves as the lead federal agency for a public health emergency, to discuss the roles and responsibilities of each agency during an anthrax response.

### **Preparedness Programs**

Although Region IX is engaged in numerous activities designed to improve the overall preparedness of the jurisdictions that it serves, it faces numerous challenges that hinder these efforts. Although FEMA and DHS leadership have cited Individual and Community Preparedness as the overarching priority for fiscal year (FY) 2011, Region IX does not have enough permanent staff to fulfill the roles and responsibilities of the Individual and Community Preparedness program initiative. According to the FY 2011 Regional-National Preparedness Annual Program Plan guidance from FEMA headquarters, each Region is responsible for increasing the preparedness of communities and individuals through the support and coordination of locally developed preparedness programs that have the greatest impact on communities within the Region.

Only one individual, an employee contracted by FEMA headquarters, has been dedicated to the Individual and Community Preparedness program initiative in Region IX. Although FEMA headquarters is working with Region IX to convert the contract employee into a permanent full-time federal employee, Region IX officials said that there are too many core functions or activities for one person to focus on and accomplish within 1 year. Without the necessary resources, Region IX is limited in its ability to focus on and participate in a wide variety of Individual and Community Preparedness initiatives and events.

Region IX also needs additional guidance from FEMA headquarters on how to implement its roles and responsibilities in the Protection and Prevention mission initiative. According to the FY 2011 Regional-National Preparedness Annual Program Plan from FEMA headquarters, each Region is responsible for (1) promoting information sharing; (2) increasing collaboration; and (3) facilitating relationships between emergency management and law enforcement entities to enhance protection and prevention capabilities in the Region. Although FEMA headquarters has recently provided several documents related to this mission initiative, Region IX officials said that the Region still does not have sufficient instructions to guide its Protection and Prevention activities. The Region has essentially interpreted the area itself.

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Staff have attended meetings and independently established relationships with participants, such as Fusion Center and local law enforcement officials. Region IX officials are concerned that without a FEMA-wide strategic approach to the Protection and Prevention mission, the level of information sharing and collaboration with the interagency community may be inconsistent from one Region to another.

### **Regional Exercise Support Program**

Region IX needs more contract oversight to be able to fully implement the authority to oversee the Regional Exercise Support Program (RESP), which was designed to provide support to regionally coordinated exercise initiatives.<sup>4</sup> The draft FEMA RESP Implementation Plan, dated October 2009, states that the Regional Offices are responsible for reviewing, approving, and managing exercise initiatives funded through the RESP. Additionally, the guidance states that FEMA headquarters is to maintain overall contractual responsibility for the RESP, to include writing statements of work and awarding contracts. Region IX officials contend that because they do not have contracting officer's technical representative (COTR)<sup>5</sup> authority for RESP, they are unable to manage the contractor's performance. Region IX would benefit from having a COTR or a task monitor<sup>6</sup> to provide local oversight of the RESP contractor.

### **Conclusion**

Region IX needs additional permanent staff to fulfill its preparedness roles and responsibilities. Its current staffing level limits its ability to focus on and participate in a wide variety of preparedness initiatives and events. Furthermore, Region IX needs direction and guidance from FEMA headquarters that establishes the roles and responsibilities of the various stakeholders for the Protection and Prevention mission to ensure a coordinated effort across Regional Offices. Finally, Region IX needs additional

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<sup>4</sup> The RESP supports regional, state, territorial, federally recognized tribes, local, and Urban Area Security Initiative-designated metropolitan area exercise initiatives. Specifically, the RESP provides (1) facilitation of Training and Exercise Plan Workshops, (2) delivery of the Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program Mobile Training Course, and (3) exercise support.

<sup>5</sup> The COTR supports the contracting officer by administering and directing the agreement within the confines of the contract, monitoring performance, and ensuring that requirements meet the terms of the contract.

<sup>6</sup> Task monitors observe contractor performance and provide technical feedback to the COTR.

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contract oversight to fully implement the authority to oversee the RESP.

## **Recommendations**

We recommend that the Deputy Administrator, Protection and National Preparedness, FEMA Headquarters:

**Recommendation #1:** Address the Region’s request for staff dedicated to Individual and Community Preparedness initiatives and outreach.

**Recommendation #2:** Provide further guidance or instruction on the roles and responsibilities of Region IX in the Protection and Prevention mission area.

**Recommendation #3:** Coordinate with Region IX to develop a pilot program that allows regional staff to serve as either a contracting officer’s technical representative or a task monitor for the Regional Exercise Support Program.

## **Management Comments and OIG Analysis**

**Recommendation #1:** FEMA concurred with this recommendation. The National Preparedness Directorate’s Individual and Community Preparedness program currently funds one contractor position in Region IX to develop and strengthen community preparedness efforts among Region IX states.

FEMA recognizes the criticality of dedicating staff to this priority and plans to hire a federal employee to fulfill the requirements of a Community Preparedness Specialist in Region IX. As for additional positions dedicated to Individual and Community Preparedness, the Regional Administrators have the authority to realign positions with their offices based on their respective priorities.

We consider this recommendation resolved because steps are being taken to implement it. However, it will remain open until evidence is provided that Region IX has sufficient permanent staff to fulfill the roles and responsibilities of the Individual and Community Preparedness program initiative.

**Recommendation #2:** FEMA did not concur with this recommendation. In 2010, FEMA’s Protection and National



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Preparedness Office of Counterterrorism and Security Preparedness (OCSP) developed two guidance documents intended to provide the Regional offices with clarification and support in implementing and coordinating preparedness, prevention and protection mission area activities. OCSP developed the following documents: (1) Regional Prevention and Protection Roles and Responsibilities and (2) Regional Coordination Strategy – Prevention and Protection Mission Support.

On August 12, 2010, OCSP released these documents to the Regional Federal Preparedness Coordinators. Region IX acknowledged receipt of these documents, as well as a joint memo that was issued in June 2011, and was encouraged by the updated guidance.

We consider this recommendation unresolved and open because Region IX officials continue to express a need for further policy and guidance on roles and responsibilities particularly as they pertain to other DHS components and law enforcement agencies. A stronger understanding within the interagency community is needed to facilitate greater collaboration and information sharing.

**Recommendation #3:** FEMA did not concur with this recommendation. FEMA headquarters officials said the Regions do not require COTR authority to manage and/or monitor contractor performance of the RESP because they already retain broad authority over the implementation of the RESP and the performance of contractors.

FEMA headquarters officials also stated that the RESP contract has been administered by headquarters to maximize efficiency of resources and that a distributed RESP would create unnecessary redundancy of effort, negating current efficiencies realized through central contract management.

FEMA headquarters officials said that they are transitioning to a new contracting model for exercise services that will allow tailoring of exercise support for the Regions. The new model requires multiple contracts, and it is not efficient for multiple contracts to be managed within each respective Region to support the same overarching program.

As in some other areas, we see a disconnect between the perceptions of FEMA headquarters and Region IX officials. FEMA

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headquarters officials say that the Region has the authority it needs, but Region IX officials told us that the RESP contract could be more effectively managed if they had more oversight authority in the Region. We believe that assigning a COTR or task monitor in the Region, particularly on a pilot basis, is a reasonable step to ensure that the Region IX RESP is adequately managed.

We consider this recommendation unresolved and open, and we will continue to work with FEMA officials in headquarters and Region IX to identify mechanisms for ensuring appropriate oversight of RESP contracts.

## Response

### **Catastrophic Planning Initiatives**

Region IX has worked extensively with its state, local, and tribal partners to develop catastrophic planning initiatives. Past efforts have included earthquake planning in the San Francisco Bay area and in northwest Nevada, hurricane planning in Hawaii, typhoon planning in Guam, and planning for the detonation of an improvised nuclear device in Nevada.

Most recently, Region IX worked cooperatively with more than 1,500 representatives from federal, state, local, and tribal partners, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector to develop the Southern California Catastrophic Earthquake Response Plan. The plan provides for a coordinated federal/state response to a catastrophic earthquake on the Southern San Andreas Fault.<sup>7</sup> According to Region IX officials, the plan is scheduled to be tested in 2012 as a part of California's Golden Guardian Annual Exercise Program.

### **Regional Response Coordination Center/Incident Management Assistance Team**

Region IX has maintained a robust Regional Response Coordination Center (RRCC) as required by PKEMRA. A critical aspect of Region IX's ability to respond to any emergency event is

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<sup>7</sup> The San Andreas Fault is the "master" fault of an intricate fault network that cuts through rocks of the California coastal region. The entire San Andreas Fault system is more than 800 miles long and extends to depths of at least 10 miles.

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the RRCC, a predesignated facility that consists of two watch centers that maintain 24/7 regional monitoring and a coordination center. Upon activation, the RRCC coordinates federal response efforts within the Region and maintains connectivity with State Emergency Operations Centers, state Fusion Centers, federal Executive Boards, and other federal and state operations and coordination centers that may contribute to situational awareness. The RRCC is staffed by FEMA personnel assigned to a Regional Support Team and, in some cases, Emergency Support Function representatives.

Region IX also staffs and oversees three Incident Management Assistance Teams (IMATs) that are prepared to deploy to an incident site to provide support and assistance. Each team has four permanent positions: team leader, operations section chief, planning section chief, and logistics section chief. Six other positions are filled by collateral-duty staff whose normal day-to-day positions are elsewhere in the Regional Office. The teams rotate among three operational statuses on a month-to-month basis: (1) Primary—deployable and operational within 12 hours; (2) Alternate—prepared to deploy within 8 hours of notification; and (3) Off Call—subject to recall as necessary.

To ensure that the Regional Support Team and the IMATs are prepared to assume their roles and responsibilities during an incident, Region IX facilitates half-day “all-hands” standdown training on a monthly basis and occasionally conducts Lightning Strike Exercises. The half-day “all-hands” standdown training focuses on response activities for specific scenarios and the development of core capabilities. For example, the standdown training that Region IX facilitated on March 9, 2011, coincidentally 2 days before the earthquake and tsunami in Japan, focused on four scenarios, including one in which a tsunami impacted the northern shores of the Hawaiian Islands.

Although Region IX has not had to deploy an IMAT for an actual incident within its jurisdiction, it has deployed an IMAT to participate in several exercises, as well as to Vermont to provide support in preparation for Hurricane Earl. Region IX, as part of the September 2010 Guam exercise, deployed an IMAT to Guam and staffed the RRCC. Region IX officials said that deployments such as these have greatly enhanced the preparedness of the Region’s IMATs.

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## **Operable and Interoperable Emergency Communications**

Region IX is responsible for establishing effective regional operable and interoperable emergency communications capabilities. To integrate disaster emergency communications capabilities, Region IX has worked extensively with state, local, and tribal governments to develop Emergency Communications Plans. These plans describe the primary and backup communications systems used by federal, state, local, and tribal governments for emergency response efforts. Additionally, the plans identify resources that stakeholders may request during a catastrophic event to support emergency responders.

To further enhance the Region's efforts to integrate disaster emergency communications, Region IX has established a Regional Emergency Communications Coordination Working Group (RECCWG). The RECCWG is responsible for (1) assessing Region IX's emergency communications capabilities, (2) facilitating disaster preparedness through the promotion of multijurisdictional and multiagency emergency communications networks, and (3) coordinating with regional stakeholders. The RECCWG hosts monthly meetings, which Region IX officials said have been instrumental in bringing together state, local, and tribal governments to discuss operable and interoperable communications issues and best practices. The RECCWG has also identified areas where the Region needs to make improvements, such as ensuring that tribes, as well as the Pacific Islands, have effective communication capabilities.

## **Conclusion**

Region IX has worked extensively with stakeholders to develop numerous catastrophic planning initiatives. In accordance with federal legislation, Region IX has also: (1) maintained a robust RRCC that coordinates federal response efforts within the Region; (2) maintained three IMATs that are prepared to deploy to an incident site to provide support and assistance; and (3) worked to establish effective regional operable and interoperable emergency communications capabilities.

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## Recovery

### **Recovery Activities**

Region IX works closely with its state, local, and tribal partners to identify regional recovery priorities. Region IX regularly hosts emergency management workshops on the Public Assistance and Individual Assistance Programs, in which discussions are held on topics such as debris removal, disaster housing, and disaster closeout. For instance, Region IX hosted a number of summits on mass care and emergency assistance that were held in Hawaii, American Samoa, CNMI, and Guam between July and September 2010. Specialists from Region IX participated in discussions of logistics, mass care, functional needs support services, and feeding. The goal of the meetings was to assist state and local emergency managers in identifying specific actions required to support and enhance their emergency assistance plans.

Region IX has actively incorporated recovery activities into numerous catastrophic planning initiatives. For instance, during the planning efforts for the Southern California Catastrophic Earthquake Plan, Region IX provided support and subject matter expertise for Emergency Support Function #6—Mass Care, Emergency Assistance, Housing, and Human Services. The Region also worked closely with local and national branches of the American Red Cross, other nonprofit organizations, and state and local officials to coordinate mass care activities. Region IX officials said that this marked the first time Emergency Support Function #14—Long-Term Community Recovery—was included in catastrophic planning efforts.

### **Fire Management Assistance Grant Program**

In an effort to enhance the effectiveness and responsiveness of the Fire Management Assistance Grant (FMAG) Program, the FEMA Administrator delegated the authority to approve or deny requests for fire management assistance to the Regional Administrators. FMAGs are made available to state and local applicants, as well as tribes, to minimize immediate adverse effects and to manage and control wildland fires that threaten to cause major disasters. To obtain FMAG assistance, a state is required to submit, and FEMA must review and approve, a fire management assistance declaration request. Prior to the delegation of authority, all fire management assistance declaration requests were processed by each Regional

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Office but approved by FEMA headquarters. Now the approval process is completed at the regional level. Since this authority was delegated to the Regions in August 2010, Region IX has received and approved numerous requests under the FMAG program.

To ensure that the fire management assistance requests are processed consistently and uniformly, Region IX developed a set of standard operating procedures. The standard operating procedures provide instructions for activities that occur predeclaration, postdeclaration, and in follow-up. The Region has met on a regular basis with the Principal Advisors<sup>8</sup> and the states to ensure the effectiveness of the standard operating procedures under the FMAG Program.

### **Disaster Grant Closeouts**

Region IX has made progress in the area of disaster closeouts; however, challenges remain. DHS OIG reported in January 2010<sup>9</sup> that delays in FEMA's disaster closeout process start at the grantee level and continue through final processing at FEMA headquarters. Region IX has the authority to mandate that disaster grants are closed out at the grantee level.

The terms of the FEMA/State Agreement require grantees to comply with the provisions of the *Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act* (Stafford Act) and FEMA's regulations in Title 44 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) for the declared disaster assistance programs. According to 44 CFR 13.50, the federal agency will close out the award when it determines that all applicable administrative actions and all required work of the grant have been completed. Within 90 days of the expiration or termination of the grant, the grantee must submit all financial, performance, and other reports as a condition of the grant.

Region IX is not consistently enforcing the terms and conditions listed in the FEMA/State Agreements. This allows grantees to move at a slow pace, resulting in extremely long delays in the disaster closeout process. Thus, FEMA continues to incur administrative costs associated with monitoring open disasters that

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<sup>8</sup> A Principal Advisor is a federal employee who represents FEMA in verifying the information provided on the fire management assistance declaration request form.

<sup>9</sup> *Opportunities to Improve FEMA's Disaster Closeout Process* (OIG-10-49), January 2010.

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should have been closed long ago. In addition, disaster funds that the grantee does not need are not deobligated in a timely manner, which would allow the funds to be put to better use.

Because Region IX perceives that it does not have the authority to compel states to comply with closing out disasters within a specific timeframe, it generally is not using the enforcement provisions in the federal regulations. According to 44 CFR 13.43, remedies for noncompliance include: (1) temporarily withholding cash payments; (2) suspending or terminating the current program award; and (3) withholding further awards for the program. FEMA headquarters needs to coordinate with its Regional Offices to ensure that they are adhering to the FEMA/State Agreements and enforcing the federal regulations for disaster grant closeouts.

### **Conclusion**

Region IX continues to work closely with its state, local, and tribal partners to identify regional recovery priorities, as well as engage in numerous activities designed to improve its recovery capabilities. In addition, Region IX has implemented the delegated authority for approving FMAGs. Improvements in the area of disaster grant closeouts are still needed.

### **Recommendation**

We recommend that the Chief Financial Officer, FEMA headquarters:

**Recommendation #4:** Ensure that the FEMA Regional Offices are enforcing the terms and conditions of FEMA/State agreements and using the remedies for noncompliance under the federal regulations to improve the timeliness of the disaster grant closeout process.

### **Management Comments and OIG Analysis**

**Recommendation #4:** FEMA concurred with this recommendation. As part of the larger Grant Management remediation activity in FY 2012, FEMA will be addressing the internal control weaknesses affecting disaster grant closeout.

We consider this recommendation resolved because steps are being taken to implement the planned corrective action. However, it will



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remain open until evidence is provided that FEMA is enforcing the terms and conditions of the FEMA/State agreements. Improvements are needed to address the major delays in FEMA's disaster grant closeout process.

## **Mitigation**

### **Mitigation Activities**

Region IX's Mitigation Division is responsible for promoting safer communities through mitigation programs that reduce the loss of lives and properties. The Mitigation Division has actively engaged its state, local, and tribal partners to identify and address regional priorities. Region IX's stakeholders have identified three top priority areas: (1) moving from flood mapping to multihazards mapping; (2) developing Risk-Based Plans; and (3) developing a plan of action to address Region IX's aging levee system.

Currently, Region IX and its state, local, and tribal partners base their mitigation activities on maps that only indicate flood zones. Multihazards maps, which identify multiple disaster threats such as floods, earthquakes, tornadoes, tsunamis, or other potential disasters, can increase the Region's abilities to focus mitigation activities on the full range of disaster threats, not just flooding. Region IX and its stakeholders have identified transitioning to multihazards mapping as one of their top priorities.

Under section 322 of the Stafford Act, to receive an increased federal share for hazard mitigation grant funding, a state must have an approved mitigation plan, also called a State Plan, in place prior to a disaster. A state can also submit a more enhanced Risk-Based Plan that takes into account more variables, such as population, topography, and any unique situation that might affect the state's mitigation needs. Region IX is working with stakeholders to approve State Plans and Risk-Based Plans to ensure that grantees receive the maximum federal assistance available after a disaster.

The third mitigation priority area for Region IX is the levee systems. Certain areas in Region IX rely on levees to mitigate the risk of flooding. However, the Region's levee infrastructure is aging, and Region IX officials expressed concern that many levees have not been properly maintained. This equates to an increased risk of a catastrophic disaster should these levees fail. Region IX

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is working with its stakeholders to focus on the development of mitigation plans to address the aging levees.

### **Assessing Cost-Effectiveness**

Region IX provides Hazard Mitigation Assistance<sup>10</sup> (HMA) to its state, local, and tribal partners to help fund projects designed to reduce or eliminate the risks associated with natural hazards. Before providing HMA, Region IX works with its partners to validate the cost-effectiveness of mitigation projects. According to the *Hazard Mitigation Assistance Unified Guidance*, mitigation projects must be cost-effective to be eligible for HMA funding, as demonstrated by a FEMA-validated benefit cost analysis (BCA). The BCA, which is performed at either the applicant or subapplicant levels, evaluates the future benefits of the mitigation project in relation to the project costs.

In the past, Region IX has also conducted loss avoidance methodology studies to quantitatively assess the benefits of a completed project in terms of its performance during an actual event. The goal of the loss avoidance studies was to answer the question, “How much damage could have occurred if the mitigation project had not been in place?” The results of these studies were used to demonstrate the effectiveness of projects and to promote the value of investing in future mitigation measures. However, Region IX officials said that although the loss avoidance methodology studies have proved to be a powerful tool from which Region IX could benefit, the studies were deemed too expensive to continue.

### **State Management Administrative Costs**

Region IX has successfully implemented the authority to review and approve funding for State Management Administrative Costs for the Public Assistance and Hazard Mitigation Grant Programs. This authority transferred the approval of State Management Administrative Costs from FEMA headquarters to the Regional Offices. Under section 324 of the Stafford Act, management costs are any indirect costs, administrative expenses, and any other expenses not directly chargeable to a specific project.

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<sup>10</sup> Hazard Mitigation Assistance is available through five programs: (1) Hazard Mitigation Grant Program, (2) Pre-Disaster Mitigation, (3) Flood Mitigation Assistance, (4) Repetitive Flood Claims, and (5) Severe Repetitive Loss.

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According to federal regulation 44 CFR 207.5, the State Management Administrative Costs ceiling is calculated by a flat percentage rate for Public Assistance—3.34% for major disaster declarations and 3.90% for emergencies. The Hazard Mitigation rate is 4.89% for major disaster declarations. However, before claimed costs can be reimbursed to the grantee, Region IX personnel must determine if such expenses are eligible. Region IX receives a request for reimbursement package from the grantee along with supporting documentation such as the types of supplies requested, description, and primary use of equipment. Region IX reviews the State’s request for reimbursement package and supporting documentation to determine the reimbursable amount based on the terms of the State Administrative Plan. Once the review is completed and the reimbursable costs are accepted, Region IX can approve and obligate the requested funds for reimbursement. Region IX officials said that this authority has helped to streamline the approval process and has allowed the Region to directly serve the needs of grantees, thus giving the states more immediate access to needed funds.

### **Conclusion**

Region IX is working with partners to identify and address mitigation priorities and has successfully implemented the review and approval of State Management Administrative Costs.

## **Grants**

### **Grant Program Activities**

FEMA uses grant programs to help state, local, and tribal governments, as well as nonprofit organizations, prepare for and recover from emergencies and disasters. FEMA headquarters’ Grant Programs Directorate, along with its Regional Offices, administers grants in the areas of disaster assistance and operations, homeland security, mitigation, and national preparedness.

FEMA headquarters and its Regional Offices are responsible for ensuring the integrity of the use of federal grant funds through oversight activities, which include both financial and programmatic monitoring. A primary goal of FEMA’s financial monitoring is to ensure grantee compliance with applicable federal regulations.

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Programmatic monitoring focuses on progress toward achieving goals and objectives of the grant programs. FEMA headquarters and its Regional Offices are working to find effective ways to incorporate financial and programmatic oversight activities for a more comprehensive review of how each grantee is using federal funds.

In an effort to enhance the effectiveness and responsiveness of disaster and nondisaster grant programs, the FEMA Administrator delegated the responsibility for determining the annual grants monitoring requirements and schedule to the Regional Offices. In FY 2009, FEMA headquarters transferred the responsibility for financial and programmatic oversight of five grant programs to the Regional Offices. At the time of our review, Region IX was responsible for the financial monitoring of approximately 73 grant programs, and FEMA headquarters was responsible for the financial monitoring of 4 grant programs (appendix D). Region IX is responsible for the programmatic monitoring of five grant programs, including the Driver's License Security Grant Program (Real ID), Emergency Management Performance Grant Program, and Emergency Operations Centers Grant Program. The Grant Programs Directorate provides programmatic monitoring oversight for the remaining disaster and nondisaster grant programs, and is responsible for business operations, systems, training, policy, and procedures supporting all FEMA grant programs.

### **Grants Monitoring Requirements and Schedule**

Region IX has made significant progress in standardizing and streamlining the financial monitoring requirements applicable to its grant programs; however, the Region faces challenges in conducting financial and programmatic oversight activities for many grant programs.

The Grant Programs Directorate developed a Financial Monitoring Plan that was last issued on November 19, 2010. The Financial Monitoring Plan is issued annually and requires each Regional Office to conduct financial monitoring on its designated grantees and incorporate the requirements set forth in the Financial Monitoring Plan into the annual monitoring schedule and activities.

According to Region IX, it is a challenge to conduct financial and programmatic monitoring of disaster and nondisaster grant

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programs because of (1) the magnitude of the workload, (2) the Region's geographical size, (3) limited staffing, and (4) budget restrictions (i.e., travel funds). Additionally, Region IX does not have sufficient access to the grant specialists at FEMA headquarters who are subject matter experts in various grant programs needed to conduct programmatic reviews. In July 2009, Region IX was delegated the authority to "fiscally oversee"<sup>11</sup> the Driver's License Security Grant Program (Real ID), the Emergency Management Performance Grant Program, and the Emergency Operations Centers Grant Program. Region IX was unable to adequately conduct the programmatic monitoring for these grant programs or to provide technical assistance site visits to a number of grantees because of insufficient resources. Therefore, Region IX's primary focus was attempting to meet the financial monitoring plan requirements, which reviewed certain grantees identified as high-risk or high-dollar grant recipients. Given the resource challenges, Region IX officials are concerned that they will not be able to fully meet the requirements of the financial monitoring plan for this fiscal year.

For example, the Pacific Islands require a great deal of grants oversight and technical assistance. To provide an adequate level of monitoring and technical assistance, personnel from Region IX must travel to the islands, which is extremely expensive and affects the Region's overall monitoring efforts. Region IX has to rely more on desk reviews for its monitoring process, rather than onsite reviews during which officials would be able to provide guidance to the grantee in person. In FY 2011, the Region IX Grants Division received a budget of approximately \$52,000, but its actual needs were projected to be approximately \$92,000 for the year.

Region IX officials believe they can be more effective now that they have the authority to determine the annual grants monitoring requirements and schedule; however, the Region needs additional resources to adequately oversee the grant programs. Without adequate oversight, grant funds are at risk of waste, fraud, abuse, or mismanagement. To address these challenges, Region IX's Grants Division has developed planning documents detailing future projected grant activity and additional staffing positions. In addition, Region IX's Grants Division has met with and expressed its concerns to the Regional Administrator and FEMA headquarters'

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<sup>11</sup> The term "fiscally oversee" involves both financial and programmatic monitoring.

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Grant Programs Directorate, and they have discussed potential solutions to those issues.

### **Conclusion**

To fully implement the authority to determine the annual grants monitoring requirements and schedule and to fiscally oversee the Driver's License Security Grant Program (Real ID), Emergency Management Performance Grant Program, and Emergency Operations Centers Grant Program, Region IX should continue to coordinate with the Regional Administrator and FEMA headquarters to acquire the resources it needs to ensure adequate oversight of its grant programs.

### **Recommendation**

We recommend that the Regional Administrator, FEMA Region IX:

**Recommendation #5:** Realign staffing and resources to ensure that Region IX's Grants Division can properly conduct financial and programmatic monitoring of disaster and nondisaster grant programs.

### **Management Comments and OIG Analysis**

FEMA concurred with this recommendation. FEMA said that the Region IX Grants Management Division was tentatively identified as a pilot for regionalization of Homeland Security Grant Programs that are currently being managed by the FEMA Grant Programs Directorate. According to FEMA, the pilot may provide additional resources to support the existing and increased workload assigned to the Region. The pilot project requires an implementation plan that includes an assessment to determine the additional resources needed by the Region. FEMA projected that the assessment will be completed in December 2011.

We consider this recommendation resolved because steps are being taken to implement it. However, it will remain open until evidence is provided that the implementation plan was completed and the necessary additional resources have been provided to the Region.

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## Mission Support

### **40-1 Actions for Nondisaster Acquisitions**

The FEMA Administrator delegated the authority to approve FEMA Form 40-1 actions for nondisaster acquisitions to the Regional Administrators. The FEMA Form 40-1, *Requisition and Commitment for Services and Supplies*, provides a detailed description of goods and services, the recommended source(s) of supply, and an estimated dollar amount needed to complete an activity. The form is typically used to acquire supplies, equipment, and services ranging from general office supplies to flu vaccinations for employees. Prior to the delegation of this authority, the process required the Region to forward all FEMA Form 40-1s to the Office of the Chief Financial Officer (OCFO) at FEMA headquarters for processing, which delayed the commitment of funds.

FEMA's OCFO provided the *Policy for the Limited Delegation of Funds Certification Authority to FEMA Components* to guide the Regional Offices in approving FEMA Form 40-1 actions. The policy delegated to all FEMA components, including the Regional Offices, the authority to certify funds and make commitments for all nondisaster acquisitions below \$500,000.

Region IX has trained and formally designated three personnel to have funds certification and commitment authority on behalf of the Region, in accordance with FEMA and OCFO guidance. Region IX routinely exercises this authority, but it has not been used for any acquisitions nearing the \$500,000 threshold. The ability to approve FEMA Form 40-1 actions has allowed the Region to expedite time-sensitive acquisitions.

### **Contract for Airlift**

In 2009, FEMA headquarters delegated to the Regional Administrators the authority to contract for or issue mission assignments to provide airlift support. FEMA contracts or mission assigns airlift support to rapidly transport people and response supplies in the event of a disaster. Historically, FEMA headquarters has maintained authority to contract for airlift services. During an emergency or response situation, the Regional Offices would contact FEMA headquarters, which would attempt to find a contractor close to the Region in need. This process was time-consuming and provided little visibility to the Regions. With



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the delegated authority, the Regional Offices can quickly contract for airlift services, as long as the contract is within the contracting officer's warrant limitations.

Within Region IX, three personnel have warrant authority to contract for airlift services. They have received sufficient training and have access to the Federal Acquisition Regulation, the DHS *Acquisitions Manual*, and the Automated Acquisition Management System.

In December 2010, Region IX exercised this authority for the first time by entering into a contract with an airlift provider in Arizona. The airlift capabilities allowed Region IX to provide recovery support for the Sovereign Tribal Nation of the Havasupai Tribe following severe storms and flooding.

### **Mission Assignments**

A mission assignment is a work order issued by FEMA to another federal agency that directs the completion of a specific task to meet urgent, immediate, and short-term needs. In July 2009, the FEMA Administrator delegated unlimited authority to the Regional Administrators to approve mission assignments. The Regional Administrators are responsible for providing monthly reports on the status of mission assignments exceeding \$25 million to the Chief Financial Officer, who is responsible for consolidating and providing reports to FEMA leadership. Region IX's Mission Support Division is responsible for obligating the funds used to support mission assignments. According to a FEMA official, this authority has not yet been used; however, Region IX believes it will be extremely effective during a major disaster because there will be no delays in issuing mission assignments.

### **Conclusion**

The delegated mission support authorities will allow Region IX to streamline its processes and respond more quickly to disaster situations. Region IX has trained personnel to approve 40-1 acquisitions, contract for airlift, and issue mission assignments.

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## Office of the Regional Administrator

### Individuals With Access and Functional Needs

Region IX's Disability Coordinator has worked extensively to identify critical gaps in Region IX's capabilities to respond to the population with access and functional needs. However, Region IX needs to improve its coordination with that community and its training of FEMA personnel. In August 2010, the FEMA Administrator assigned a Disability Coordinator position to each Regional Office. The responsibilities of the Disability Coordinator are as follows:

- (1) providing guidance and coordination on matters related to individuals with access and functional needs in emergency planning requirements and relief efforts;
- (2) consulting with organizations that represent the interests and rights of individuals with disabilities about their needs in emergency planning requirements and relief efforts;
- (3) coordinating and disseminating best practices and model evacuation plans for individuals with disabilities; and
- (4) ensuring the development of training materials and a curriculum for training emergency response providers; state, local, and tribal government officials; and others on the needs of individuals with disabilities.

A particular focus for Region IX is ensuring that those with access and functional needs are integrated into planning efforts from the start, instead of as an annex to plans. The FEMA Administrator has said, "My experience tells me if we wait and plan for people with disabilities after we write the basic plan, we fail." Incorporating those with access and functional needs into planning requires a significant amount of coordination and outreach, especially since it is estimated that up to 20% of Region IX's population has such needs. Region IX has engaged in numerous outreach efforts with emergency managers, as well as stakeholders from the access and functional needs community. In addition to speaking at various conferences, webinars, teleconferences, tabletop exercises, and meetings, Region IX's Disability Coordinator participated as an observer in the full-scale

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Radiological Emergency Preparedness Program exercise at the Palo Verde Nuclear Generating Station in Arizona.

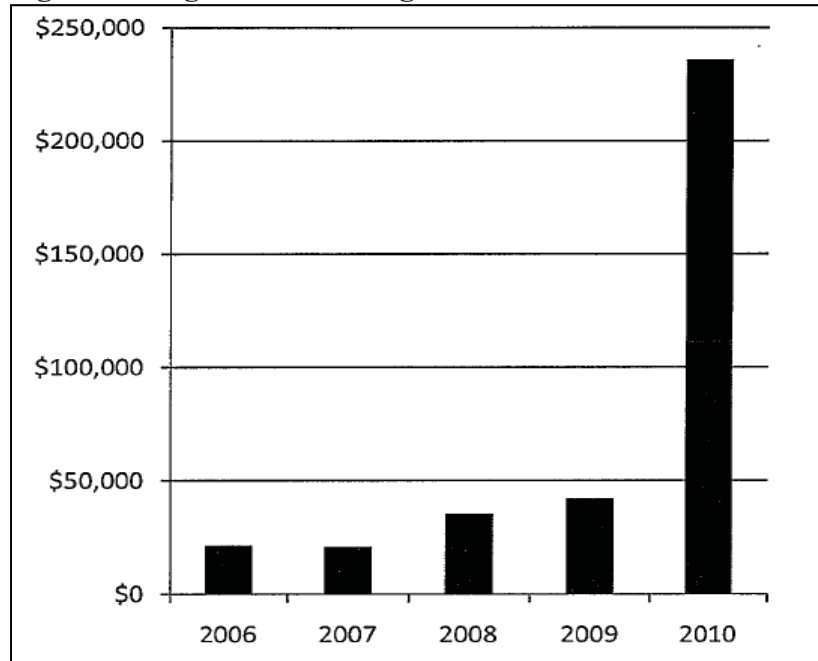
Although Region IX has taken steps to improve its outreach efforts, it struggles to facilitate relationships among state, local, and tribal jurisdictions and other qualified stakeholders from the access and functional needs community. Region IX officials said that this situation stems from a breakdown in communication between leaders of the access and functional needs community and emergency managers. The leaders need to better communicate their challenges and viable solutions to emergency managers, and emergency managers need to work with the leaders to develop and implement solutions.

Region IX's Disability Coordinator discussed the need for mandatory training for all FEMA personnel on how to incorporate the access and functional needs community into all aspects of emergency management.

### **Training**

The FEMA Administrator has said that employee development is a top priority for the agency. To ensure that the Regional Offices are able to "grow their own talent," FEMA provides funding for training at the regional level. From FY 2009 to FY 2010, Region IX's training budget was increased from approximately \$40,000 to \$235,000 (figure 4). Region IX is working to create a single division or office with overall responsibility for training and a coordinated approach to the expenditure of training funds.

**Figure 4. Region IX Training Funds**



Source: *FEMA - A Region IX Approach to Internal Training*.

Currently, there is no regional approach to training for Region IX. Decision making resides in each division, and there is no forum to collectively balance the competing demands of the Region's multiple divisions and offices. To remediate this issue, in November 2010 Region IX's National Preparedness Division developed a white paper entitled *A Region IX Approach to Internal Training*, which outlined a strategy to identify, conduct, and track applicable training related to employee development and disaster support roles, while ensuring senior management oversight.

The white paper also recommended the development of a Regional Training Program and Regional Training Working Group. The Regional Training Program will establish opportunities for professional development and enhance the level of preparedness for a wide range of potential emergency incidents to ensure mission success. The Regional Training Working Group is chaired by the Regional Deputy Administrator and consists of Division Directors, a union representative, and the Regional Training Manager. The working group meets monthly and focuses on coordinating training to ensure that Region IX is using training funds effectively.

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The Regional Training Working Group sent Region IX personnel a survey inquiring about training needed to perform their duties. The results indicated that personnel desired training that is tailored to their specific duties and programs, as well as basic professional development (e.g., public speaking and computer skills). The survey results gave the working group a better knowledge of the Region's training needs.

Region IX manages core training requirements through several different portals hosted by DHS and FEMA, which makes training more difficult to track. Most of Region IX's divisions indicated a desire for a centralized training portal with a standardized curriculum. This would streamline training, especially for new employees.

### **Regional Advisory Council**

Region IX established a mandated Regional Advisory Council (RAC) in 2007; however, it has not been maintained. The RAC, which is chaired by the Regional Administrator and consists of members representing a wide variety of major stakeholders and different disciplines, was designed to do the following:

- (1) Advise the Regional Administrator on emergency management issues specific to the Region;
- (2) Identify geographic, demographic, or other characteristics peculiar to any state, local, or tribal government within the Region that might make preparedness, protection, response, recovery, or mitigation more complicated or difficult; and
- (3) Advise the Regional Administrator of any weaknesses or deficiencies in preparedness, protection, response, recovery, and mitigation for any state, local, and tribal government within the Region.

The RAC convened on a number of occasions, but most recently in July 2008. Bringing together all of the RAC members has proved to be a challenge. According to Region IX officials, the Region faces "unique challenges," including its geographical size and cultural differences. Region IX covers 386,000 square miles and spans eight time zones, making it difficult and cost-prohibitive to schedule face-to-face meetings. The use of teleconferences and

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video chats for meetings has not been successful because of the multiple time zones.

Region IX officials said that changes in administrations, such as the election of a new state Governor, have resulted in personnel turnover throughout the emergency management community, requiring the Region to regularly replace “anchor” members of the RAC. These issues led to the decision to postpone RAC meetings for a year to avoid seating new council members while the Region was unable to hold recurring meetings.

Despite a lengthy postponement of RAC activity, Region IX officials have continued to interact with stakeholders throughout the Region. For instance, Region IX has brought together members of the Regional Interagency Steering Committee. The Regional Interagency Steering Committee exists to coordinate interagency and intergovernmental issues related to disaster planning and operations. Federal agencies designate representatives to serve on the committee and participate in regional preparedness activities. Additionally, state emergency management agencies are encouraged to send representatives to committee meetings and to participate in regional exercise and training activities. Even so, Region IX officials agreed that the RAC needs to be reinvigorated. A senior official said that the Region is in the process of seating new council members and had hoped to be able to reconvene RAC meetings in May 2011.

### **Conclusion**

Despite the addition of a Disability Coordinator and increased outreach to the access and functional needs community, Region IX needs to integrate the access and functional needs community more effectively into disaster planning. Furthermore, Region IX needs to continue to support efforts to standardize and coordinate its training curriculum to ensure the most effective and efficient use of training funds. Finally, Region IX needs to maintain its Regional Advisory Council to identify and remediate weaknesses or deficiencies in preparedness, protection, response, recovery, and mitigation activities.

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## Recommendations

We recommend that the Regional Administrator, FEMA Region IX:

**Recommendation #6:** Coordinate, engage, and consult with qualified stakeholders from the access and functional needs community to completely integrate their needs into regionwide disaster planning efforts.

**Recommendation #7:** Complete the Regional Training Program, developing a standardized or coordinated training curriculum that includes training to incorporate those with access and functional needs into disaster planning.

**Recommendation #8:** Reconvene the Regional Advisory Council and identify alternative methods to facilitate meetings with council members.

## Management Comments and OIG Analysis

**Recommendation #6:** FEMA concurred with this recommendation. FEMA stated that at the time of the OIG's visit to Region IX, regional offices were just beginning to integrate Regional Disability Integration Specialists into regional activities and responsibilities. Since that time, the Region IX Regional Disability Integration Specialist has made significant progress in coordinating Functional Needs Support Services–related interactions across a broad array of jurisdictions and operational areas with an emphasis on larger, more heavily populated jurisdictions. In turn, these stakeholders and the jurisdictions provide the Regional Disability Integration Specialist with feedback on successes, challenges, and concerns.

Region IX has further driven the outreach initiative by forming FEMA's first Regional Functional Needs Working Group that met for the first time in late October 2011. Although travel budgets that allow for greater interaction and visibility continue to be an issue, the senior leadership in Region IX remains supportive of Regional Disability Integration Specialist efforts to coordinate the needs of the functional needs community with the realities of emergency management officials.

We consider this recommendation resolved because steps are being taken to implement it. However, it will remain open until evidence



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is provided that Region IX established the Functional Needs Working Group and is making progress in ensuring that the needs of the access and functional needs community are met regionwide.

**Recommendation #7:** FEMA concurred with this recommendation. Region IX has implemented "standdown training days," consolidated the selection of courses and meeting schedules to maximize participation, and developed methods to prioritize trainees. Though internal training thus far has not specifically targeted courses that teach methods for including those with access and functional needs into disaster planning activities, this topic will be proposed to the Regional Training Working Group for incorporation into future training opportunities.

We consider this recommendation resolved because steps are being taken to implement it. However, it will remain open until evidence is provided that Region IX established and put into effect a standardized or coordinated training curriculum that includes training for how to incorporate those with access and functional needs into disaster planning.

**Recommendation #8:** FEMA concurred with this recommendation and said that on August 2, 2011, Region IX held a meeting of its RAC at the regional office in Oakland, California. In addition to the regional senior management team, new members that had recently been appointed by the Regional Administrator participated. The agenda included discussions of the six priorities of the Regional Administrator for FY 2011 and presentations on the Whole Community, Presidential Policy Directive #8 - National Preparedness, and the National Disaster Recovery Framework.

Cognizant of the geographical and logistical challenges of meeting quarterly in person, RAC members discussed alternative measures to enhance dialog. RAC members agreed that there will be two in-person meetings in Oakland, California, and two or more video conference and teleconference discussions to effectively carry out its mission. A video conference for RAC members was scheduled for late November 2011. Region IX will also be communicating routinely with RAC members by email, forwarding appropriate draft documents or policies for their review and providing information documents.

We consider this recommendation resolved because steps are being taken to implement it. However, it will remain open until evidence

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is provided that RAC has continuously held meetings and maintained frequent dialogue.

## **Conclusion**

Overall, Region IX is making significant progress toward fulfilling its legislated responsibilities and implementing the recently delegated authorities. However, staffing shortages continue to be a major impediment to accomplishing all of the regional responsibilities.

Even though FEMA headquarters filled 84 vacancies across the 10 FEMA Regions, Region IX officials repeatedly expressed concern about staffing shortages, specifically in the Grants Division and the Individual and Community Preparedness program initiative. Considering the reduced workload for FEMA headquarters since the regionalization of responsibilities, it may be appropriate for FEMA headquarters to transfer additional positions to the Regional Offices.

## Appendix A

### Purpose, Scope, and Methodology

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The objective of our review was to determine whether FEMA’s Regional Offices are effectively meeting their legislated responsibilities and implementing several delegated authorities. This report is limited to our review of FEMA Region IX.

To accomplish our objective, we reviewed and analyzed the *Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act*, the *Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act of 2006*, prior DHS OIG and Government Accountability Office reports relevant to our review, and documents provided by FEMA headquarters and Region IX, as well as other applicable documents.

We interviewed officials from FEMA headquarters, FEMA Region IX, and selected officials from state, local, and tribal jurisdictions. We conducted these interviews at FEMA headquarters in Washington, D.C.; Region IX offices in Oakland, California; and various state, local, and tribal offices in California and Nevada.

We conducted this performance review between November 2010 and June 2011 pursuant to the *Inspector General Act of 1978*, as amended, and according to the Quality Standards for Inspections issued by the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency.

## Appendix B Management Comments to the Draft Report

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U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
500 C Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20472



# FEMA

NOV 23 2011

MEMORANDUM FOR: Charles K. Edwards  
Acting Inspector General  
Office of the Inspector General

FROM:   
David J. Kaufman  
Director  
Office of Policy and Program Analysis

SUBJECT: FEMA's Response to OIG Draft Report, *Inspection of FEMA's Regional Offices-Region IX* (OIG Project No. 11-008-EMO-FEMA)

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on your draft report. The findings in the report will be used to strengthen the effectiveness and efficiency of how we execute and measure our programs. We recognize the need to continue to improve our processes, including addressing the recommendations raised in this report. Our responses to your nine recommendations are as follows:

**Recommendation #1:** Address the Region's request for staff dedicated to Individual and Community Preparedness initiatives and outreach.

**FEMA Response:** FEMA concurs with this recommendation.

The National Preparedness Directorate's Individual and Community Preparedness Division (ICPD) currently funds one contractor position in Region IX to develop and strengthen community preparedness efforts among Region IX states. Responsibilities include providing technical assistance to State Citizen Corps and Community Emergency Response Team program managers, coordinating with internal FEMA and external partners to promote the importance of whole community planning and participation, assisting States in managing strategic investments for individual and community preparedness, and advancing the priority of involving the public in emergency management initiatives and activities.

We recognize the criticality of dedicating staff to this priority. Therefore, ICPD is working to sustain the individual and community preparedness position/capability by in-sourcing the

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## Appendix B

### Management Comments to the Draft Report

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contract position. Once that position transitions, FEMA can proceed with posting, interviewing and hiring a federal employee to fulfill the requirements of a community preparedness specialist in Region IX.

With regards to additional positions dedicated to individual and community preparedness, the Regional Administrators have authority to re-align positions within their offices based on their respective priorities.

FEMA believes this satisfies the intent of the recommendation and requests that this recommendation be resolved and closed.

**Recommendation #2:** Provide further guidance or instruction on the roles and responsibilities of Region IX in the Protection and Prevention mission area.

**FEMA Response:** FEMA non-concurs with this recommendation.

During the summer of 2010, FEMA's Protection and National Preparedness (PNP)/Office of Counterterrorism and Security Preparedness (OCSP) developed two guidance documents intended to provide FEMA Regional Offices with clarification and support in implementing and coordinating preparedness prevention and protection mission area activities. More specifically, OCSP developed the following documents: "Regional Prevention and Protection Roles and Responsibilities," and "Regional Coordination Strategy – Prevention and Protection Mission Support."

These documents were coordinated with, and reviewed by, the DHS Office of Intelligence and Analysis, DHS Office for Infrastructure Protection, and the FEMA Office of Chief Security Officer. On August 12, 2010, OCSP released these documents to the Regional Federal Preparedness Coordinators (FPCs).

In addition to the development, coordination and provision of these internal guidance documents, OCSP worked with PNP's Office of Preparedness Integration and Coordination (OPIC) to incorporate the protection and prevention mission areas into the Annual Program Plan (APP) guidance provided to the regions -- in order to encourage the implementation and coordination of prevention and protection mission area activities.

OCSP has endeavored to provide increased support, guidance and information sharing to the FEMA Regional Offices. OCSP participates in quarterly strategic meetings and discussions with all of the Regional FPCs in order to better understand and support their unique regional needs, goals and objectives, and to ensure there are no barriers in information sharing between OCSP and the FEMA Regional Offices.

FEMA believes this satisfies the intent of the recommendation and requests that this recommendation be resolved and closed.



## Appendix B

### Management Comments to the Draft Report

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**Recommendation #3:** Coordinate with Region IX to develop a pilot program that allows regional staff to serve as either a contracting officer's technical representative or a task monitor for the Regional Exercise Support Program.

**FEMA Response:** FEMA non-concurs with this recommendation.

The Regions do not require contracting officer representative (COTR) authority to manage and/or monitor contractor performance of the Regional Exercise Support Program (RESP). Like all FEMA Regions, Region IX already retains broad authority over the implementation of the RESP and the performance of respective contractors to include: approving/denying RESP applications, developing and approving the contractor work plan, overseeing the performance of the work, monitoring contractor engagement with state and local officials, and conducting all follow-up required. Per the RESP Implementation Plan roles and responsibilities, Section 2.1.2; the Regional Offices "Assume contractual responsibilities for the RESP to include approval/signatory authority for contractor work plans." The RESP contract has been administered by FEMA Headquarters to maximize efficiency of resources. A distributed RESP would create unnecessary redundancy of effort and FEMA would lose current efficiencies realized through central contract management. Additionally, after soliciting them for feedback on this issue, most of the regions preferred that the RESP contract be centrally managed.

Finally, FEMA Headquarters is transitioning to a new contracting model to provide functional-based exercise services to allow tailoring of exercise support for the NEP and Regions. This model requires multiple contracts and it is not feasible or efficient for multiple contracts to be managed within each respective Region to support the same overarching program. FEMA Headquarters will continue to work with the Regions to refine processes and procedures while ensuring centralized coordination to enable execution of the NEP and promote consistency, best practices and lessons learned throughout all FEMA Regions.

FEMA believes this satisfies the intent of the recommendation and requests that this recommendation be resolved and closed.

**Recommendation #4:** Ensure that the FEMA Regional Offices are enforcing the terms and conditions of FEMA/State agreements and using the remedies for noncompliance under the federal regulations to improve the timeliness of the disaster closeout process.

**FEMA Response:** FEMA concurs with this recommendation.

As part of the larger Grant Management remediation activity in FY 2012, FEMA will be addressing the internal control weakness around closeout.

FEMA requests that this recommendation be resolved and open pending implementation of the stated corrective action.

**Recommendation #5:** Realign staffing and resources to ensure Region IX's Grants Division can properly conduct the financial and programmatic monitoring of disaster and non-disaster grant programs.

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**FEMA Response:** FEMA concurs with this recommendation.

Region IX Grants Management Division has been identified tentatively as a pilot for regionalization of Homeland Security Grant Programs that are currently being managed by FEMA Grants Program Directorate. The pilot would potentially provide additional resources to support the existing and increased workload assigned to the Region. The pilot project requires an implementation plan that includes an assessment to determine the additional resources needed by the Region. The projected completion for the assessment is December 2011.

FEMA believes this satisfies the intent of the recommendation and requests that this recommendation be resolved and closed.

**Recommendation #6:** Coordinate, engage, and consult with qualified stakeholders from the access and functional needs community to completely integrate their needs into region-wide disaster planning efforts.

**FEMA Response:** FEMA concurs with this recommendation.

At the time of the Inspector General visit to Region IX, all FEMA regional offices were just integrating their Regional Disability Integration Specialist into regional activities and responsibilities. Since that time, the Region IX Regional Disability Integration Specialist (RDIS) has made significant progress in coordinating Functional Needs Support Services (FNSS) related interactions across a broad array of jurisdictions and operational areas with an emphasis on our larger, more heavily populated jurisdictions. In turn, these stakeholders and the jurisdictions provide the RDIS with feedback on successes, challenges, and concerns.

Region IX has further driven the outreach initiative by forming FEMA's first Regional Functional Needs Working Group (FNWG) that met for the first time in late October 2011. While travel budgets that would allow for greater interaction and visibility continue to be an issue, the senior leadership in FEMA Region IX remains supportive of RDIS efforts to coordinate the needs of the functional needs community with the realities of emergency management officials. The Region feels increased coordination of internal regional training that embraces Functional Needs awareness and planning is essential. Divisional support to achieve RDIS integration into planning and exercises within FEMA Region IX continues successfully.

FEMA believes this satisfies the intent of the recommendation and requests that this recommendation be resolved and closed.

**Recommendation #7:** Complete the Regional Training Program, developing a standardized or coordinated training curriculum that includes training for how to incorporate those with access and functional needs into disaster planning.

**FEMA Response:** FEMA concurs with this recommendation.

During Fiscal Year 2010, and prior to the visit of the Inspector General, FEMA Region IX recognized the need for a plan to properly manage training funds, and provide guidance on course identification and selection. In October 2010, the Regional Administrator approved the

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## Appendix B

### Management Comments to the Draft Report

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establishment of the Regional Training Working Group (RTWG), comprised of regional senior leadership. The goal of the RTWG, chaired by the Deputy Regional Administrator and staffed by the Division Directors, is to establish opportunities for professional development and enhance the level of preparedness needed for a wide range of potential incidents to ensure mission success.

The RTWG proposed a strategy to identify, conduct, and track applicable training related to employee development and disaster support roles, while ensuring senior management oversight and directed regional training staff to conduct a training needs assessment (TNA). The TNA was developed and implemented using free online tools and metrics, and has proven to be a valuable tool to justify and focus on the region's training priorities and align program objectives with available funding.

As a result, Region IX has implemented "stand-down training days," consolidated the selection of courses and meeting schedules to maximize participation, developed methods to prioritize trainees, and realized a significant cost saving to FEMA. The "stand-down training days" in particular, incorporates all staff and includes an open discussion of issues particular to the needs of our various stakeholders, including those with special needs.

In addition Region IX, through the direction of the FEMA Administrator, is also in the process of integrating the Radiological Emergency Preparedness Program into the larger world of emergency management – thereby increasing its scope and the integration of those with special needs into the Program, which includes on-the-spot educational training for issues that emerge during the off-site portions of the exercises. This was true this past year as our own Disability Integration Specialist and his service animal were run through the decontamination process.

Finally, disaster planning currently being conducted by the Response Division incorporates the "whole community" initiative and seeks participation across the full spectrum of community. This outreach is intended to strengthen the assets, institutions, and social processes that work well in a community to improve resilience and emergency management outcomes. Though internal training thus far has not specifically targeted courses that teach methods for including those with access and functional needs into disaster planning activities, this topic will be proposed to the RTWG for incorporation into future training opportunities.

FEMA believes this satisfies the intent of the recommendation and requests that this recommendation be resolved and closed.

**Recommendation #8:** Reconvene the Regional Advisory Council and identify alternative methods to facilitate meetings with council members.

**FEMA Response:** FEMA concurs with this recommendation.

On August 2, 2011, Region IX held a meeting of its Regional Advisory Council (RAC) at the regional office in Oakland, California. In addition to the regional senior management team, participating were new members that had recently been appointed by the Regional Administrator. The agenda included discussions of the six priorities of the Regional Administrator for Fiscal Year 2011 and presentations on Whole Community, Presidential Policy Directive

## Appendix B

### Management Comments to the Draft Report

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#8- National Preparedness and the National Disaster Recovery Framework. Cognizant of the geographical and logistical challenges of meeting quarterly in person, RAC members discussed at length measures to be taken to allow for very frequent dialogue. Members agreed that there will be two in-person meetings in Oakland, California and two or more video conference and teleconference discussions to effectively carry out its mission. A videoconference for RAC members is scheduled for late November 2011. Region IX will also be communicating routinely with RAC members by email, forwarding appropriate draft documents or policies for their review and providing information documents.

FEMA believes this satisfies the intent of the recommendation and requests that this recommendation be resolved and closed.

**Recommendation #9:** Realign resources to ensure that Region IX has the necessary resources to fulfill its mission, including its legislated responsibilities and delegated authorities.

**FEMA Response:** FEMA non-concurs with this recommendation.

FEMA will continue to take into consideration the specific needs of Region IX, including the Report's findings, but must also consider the current budget challenges and the competing needs across the agency.

FEMA believes this satisfies the intent of the recommendation and requests that this recommendation be resolved and closed.

We thank you, again, for the opportunity to provide our comments to your recommendations contained in your draft report. Should you have further questions regarding our response, please do not hesitate to call FEMA's Chief Audit Liaison, Brad Shefka, at 202-646-1308.

**Appendix C**  
**Regional Responsibilities and Delegated Authorities**

<b>Regional Responsibilities and Delegated Authorities</b>																		
<b>Regional Division</b>	<b>R1</b>	<b>R2</b>	<b>R3</b>	<b>R4</b>	<b>R5</b>	<b>R6</b>	<b>R7</b>	<b>R8</b>	<b>R9</b>	<b>R10</b>	<b>A1</b>	<b>A2</b>	<b>A3</b>	<b>A4</b>	<b>A5</b>	<b>A6</b>	<b>A7</b>	<b>A8</b>
Office of Administrator									X									
National Preparedness	X	X			X	X	X	X	X								X	
Recovery	X	X						X					X					X
Response	X	X	X	X	X	X			X			X		X				
Mitigation	X	X																X
Mission Support		X			X				X		X	X		X				
Grants															X	X		X

- R1: Work with state, local, and tribal governments, emergency response providers, and other appropriate entities to identify and address regional priorities.
- R2: Ensure effective, coordinated, and integrated regional preparedness, protection, response, recovery, and mitigation activities and programs for natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other manmade disasters (including planning, training, exercise, and professional development).
- R3: Assist in the development of regional capabilities needed for a national catastrophic response system.
- R4: Coordinate the establishment of effective regional operable and interoperable emergency communications capabilities.
- R5: Staff and oversee one or more strike teams to serve as the focal point of the federal government’s initial response efforts for natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other manmade disasters within that Region, and otherwise build federal response capabilities to respond to natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other manmade disasters within that Region.
- R6: Designate an individual responsible for the development of strategic and operational regional plans in support of the National Response Plan (referred to as the National Response Framework since 2008).
- R7: Foster the development of mutual aid and other cooperative agreements.
- R8: Identify critical gaps in regional capabilities to respond to populations with special needs.
- R9: Maintain and operate a Regional Response Coordination Center or its successor.
- R10: Establish a Regional Advisory Council.
- A1: Issue mission assignments in excess of \$10 million.
- A2: Contract for airlift.
- A3: Approve Fire Management Assistance Grants.
- A4: Approve 40-1 actions for non-disaster acquisitions.
- A5: Determine the annual grants monitoring requirements and schedule.
- A6: Fiscally oversee the (a) Emergency Management Performance, (b) Emergency Operations Center, and (c) Driver’s License Security grant programs.
- A7: Oversee the Regional Exercise Support Program.
- A8: Review and approve funding for State Management Administrative Costs for the Public Assistance and Hazard Mitigation Grant Programs.

## Appendix D

### FEMA Grant Programs

#### Grant Programs Designated for Financial Monitoring by FEMA Headquarters

- Assistance to Firefighters
- *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009* – Station Construction Grants
- Fire Prevention and Safety
- Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response

#### Grant Programs Designated for Financial Monitoring by FEMA Regional Offices

Disaster Assistance	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alternative Housing Pilot Program</li> <li>• Crisis Counseling</li> <li>• Debris Removal Insurance</li> <li>• Disaster Assistance Project-Direct Loans</li> <li>• Disaster Donations Management</li> <li>• Emergency Food and Shelter National Board</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ARRA – Emergency Food and Shelter National Board</li> <li>• Fire Management Assistance</li> <li>• Individuals and Households – Other Needs</li> <li>• Katrina Case Management</li> <li>• Public Assistance</li> <li>• United Methodist Committee on Relief</li> </ul>
Disaster Operations	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Urban Search and Rescue Cooperative Agreement (Activations)</li> <li>• Urban Search and Rescue Cooperative Agreement (Preparedness)</li> </ul>	
Grant Programs	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Buffer Zone Protection Program</li> <li>• Driver's License Security Grant Program (Real ID)</li> <li>• Emergency Management Performance Grant Program</li> <li>• Emergency Operations Centers</li> <li>• Freight Rail Security Grant Program</li> <li>• Homeland Security Grant Program:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Citizen Corps Program</li> <li>– Metropolitan Medical Response System Grants</li> <li>– State Homeland Security Grant Program</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Intercity Bus Security Grant Program</li> <li>• Intercity Passenger Rail Security</li> <li>• Interoperable Emergency Communication Grants</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mississippi Interoperable Communications Grant Program</li> <li>• Operation Stonegarden</li> <li>• Port Security Grant Program</li> <li>• ARRA – Port Security Grant Program</li> <li>• Public Safety Interoperable Communications Program</li> <li>• Transit Security Grant Program</li> <li>• Tribal Homeland Security Grant Program</li> <li>• ARRA – Transit Security Grant Program</li> <li>• Trucking Security Program</li> <li>• Urban Areas Security Initiative Nonprofit Security Grant Program</li> </ul>
Mitigation	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community Assistance Program – State Support Services Element</li> <li>• Cooperating Technical Partners</li> <li>• Earthquake Consortium</li> <li>• Earthquake State Assistance</li> <li>• Earthquake Technology Transfer</li> <li>• Flood Insurance Rate Maps</li> <li>• Flood Mitigation Assistance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hazard Mitigation Grant Program</li> <li>• Map Modernization Management Support</li> <li>• National Dam Safety</li> <li>• National Emergency Management Association</li> <li>• Pre-Disaster Mitigation Competitive</li> <li>• Pre-Disaster Mitigation JES Earmark FY10</li> <li>• Repetitive Flood Claims</li> <li>• Severe Repetitive Loss</li> </ul>
National Preparedness	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chemical Stockpile Emergency Preparedness Program</li> <li>• Citizen Corps Program:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– International Association of Chiefs of Police</li> <li>– National Volunteer Fire Council</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Competitive Training Grant</li> <li>• Evaluations and Assessment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Homeland Security Preparedness Technical Assistance Program</li> <li>• National Exercise Program</li> <li>• National Incident Management System</li> <li>• National Training Program</li> <li>• Regional Catastrophic Preparedness Grant Program</li> <li>• Systems Support Grant Program</li> </ul>
USFA	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Degrees at a Distance Training Assistance</li> <li>• Firefighter Emergency Medical Services Outreach, Technology Transfer, Information Dissemination and Technical Assistance</li> <li>• Fire Service Hazardous Materials</li> <li>• International Association of Fire Fighters John P. Redmond Symposium</li> <li>• National Fallen Firefighter Memorial Program</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PARADE Grants</li> <li>• Residential Fire Safety &amp; Fire Sprinkler Technology</li> <li>• Safe Kids</li> <li>• State Fire Training Systems Grants</li> <li>• TRADE Grants</li> <li>• Volunteer Fire and Emergency Medical Services Resource Initiative</li> <li>• National Fire Academy Educational Program</li> </ul>

**Appendix E**  
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**Appendix F**  
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